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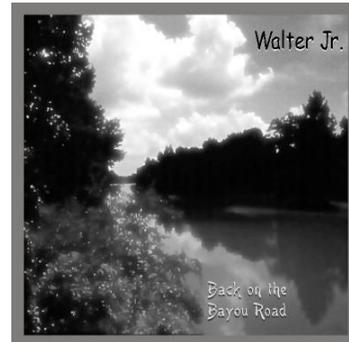
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WALTER JR.

Back on the Bayou Road

Gatortone 2001

By MICHAEL CALA



Though the title of *Back On The Bayou Road* suggests traditional or old-time Cajun music such as the accordian-rich Acadienne tunes found on regional labels like Swallow and Goldband, Walter Jr.'s new album actually heads into musical territory strongly suggestive of 1950's Louisiana R&B. Walter wrote all 15 tracks on the disc, and nearly all of them offer props to performers like Larry Williams, Professor Longhair, and Guitar Slim.

The disc features fine songwriting and a stellar roster of musicians, including Bonnie Bramlett on duets and backing vocals; Sonny Landreth on Dobro; the Mighty Muscle Shoals Horns; and Paul Hornsby, Jay Wilson, and Joe Walk taking turns on piano. The album is at once a throwback to the golden days of classic Southern R&B and a very personal and thoughtful take on the music of that era.

The album's track sequencing and sound quality are excellent. The opening tune, "Hot Louisiana Rock," tips its hat to Lloyd Price, or maybe Percy Mayfield, and sets the tone for the rest of the album. "Done Did Dat" detours nicely into early Neville Brothers-style soul, and Bramlett and Walter share vocals on the title track for a salty tribute to some of the most rockin' male-female R&B acts of yore (think Otis & Carla or early Ike & Tina). "Mojo Man," "Surrender to Love," and "Leave Well Enough Alone" include swampy percussion and suitably funky guitar; "Delta Cat" features excellent horn work; and fine Louisiana-style piano graces the album's later tracks. Topper Price's tasteful harp work appears on one track, "Two Tone Baby," and leaves the listener wanting more.

Overall, this album boasts fine songwriting and musicianship mixed with soul as palpable as the music to which it offers tribute.